

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1103

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 6745

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: SOPN, PBOR, MOPS, VM, CB

SUBJ: VIET-CAMBODIAN BORDER DIFFICULTIES: WESTERN JOURNALISTS

INVITED TO HANOI

REFS: A) HONG KONG 2633

B) BANGKOK 6230

C) VIENTIANE 0263

D) MOSCOW 03023

E) PEKING 0549

1. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SEVERAL JOURNALISTS IN EAST ASIA HAVE BEEN INVITED SUDDENLY TO HANOI, BUT DO NOT KNOW WHO PLANS TO GO. JOURNALISTS HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN TOLD TO GO TO HANOI AND THEN PROCEED URGENTLY TO THE SOUTH. REPORTS ON NUMBERS OF INVITATIONS VARY FROM 4 TO 9.

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2. FRENCH EMBASSY HERE IS AWARE OF THE INVITATIONS BUT TAKES A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT VIEW AS SEEN BY THE FRENCH ELSEWHERE OF LIKELY DEVELOPMENTS (REFTELS). THEY ALSO INFORMED US THAT THE BANGKOK BASED LE MONDE CORRESPONDENT, ROLAND PARINQUAUZ, HAS BEEN INVITED SUDDENLY TO HANOI. THEY ARE INTRIGUED BY THE INVITATIONS TO THE JOURNALISTS AND HAVE A "RUMOR" OF AN IMPENDING ANNOUNCEMENT IN HANOI MARCH 5. RATHER THAN AN

ANNOUNCEMENT OF MILITARY OPERATIONS BY THE VIETNAMESE AGAINST THE CAMBODIANS, HOWEVER, FRENCH HERE WONDER IF HANOI MAY NOT MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT CONCERNING ITS PEACE PROPOSALS OR EVEN CONCEIVABLY OF RESULTS OF SECRET CONTACTS WITH THE CAMBODIANS.

3. MORE BROADLY, FRENCH HERE SHARE OUR ASSESSMENT THAT AN ATTEMPTED MILITARY TAKEOVER OF PHNOM PENH BY THE VIETNAMESE IS MOST UNLIKELY. THEY ALSO FEEL THAT ANOTHER VIETNAMESE THRUST INTO CAMBODIA, WHILE NOT OUT OF THE QUESTION, WOULD YIELD LITTLE FOR HANOI BUT MORE DIFFICULTIES WITH CAMBODIAN GUERRILLAS. FRENCH HERE ARE ALSO AWARE OF THE REPORTS OF BORDER FIGHTING BETWEEN CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE, THINK THESE MINOR SKIRMISHES ARE NOTHING NEW, BUT SEE THEM AS ANOTHER REMINDER TO HANOI THAT PEKING HAS ITS INTERESTS IN VIET-CAMBODIAN BORDER DEVELOPMENTS. OVERALL, OUR FRENCH SOURCE ANTICIPATES POLITICAL PRESSURES, PRIMARILY, RATHER THAN MILITARY EFFORTS BY HANOI TO BRING ABOUT THE REMOVAL OF THE POL POT REGIME, HANOI'S PRESUMED REAL GOAL. FRENCH STILL THINK THAT SIHANOUK COULD RETURN TO SOME MEASURE OF POWER, A DENOUEMENT WHICH BOTH HANOI AND PEKING COULD ACCEPT.

4. COMMENT: WHILE IT IS DIFFICULT TO SPECULATE WHAT PRECISELY THE VIETNAMESE HAVE IN MIND, THE INVITATIONS TO THE JOURNALISTS SEEM TO BE FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT HANOI IS STILL EMPHASIZING POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT, PARTLY THROUGH THESE PROPAGANDISTIC EFFORTS. HOWEVER, HANOI'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND THE PRESS

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MAY BE ABLE TO PLAY SEEM OVERLY OPTIMISTIC.

5. WITH REGARD TO THE BROADER ISSUES ON WHICH THE FRENCH DIPLOMAT TOUCHED, HANOI APPEARS INCREASINGLY UNDER PRESSURE AS A RESULT OF COMBAT CASUALTIES, ECONOMIC LOSSES DIRECTLY FROM THE BORDER FIGHTING, AND DEMORALIZATION OF ITS TROOPS AND POPULATION, ESPECIALLY AMONG SOUTHERNERS. DESPITE THE SEEMING INTRACTABILITY OF ITS PROBLEMS WITH CAMBODIA, WE STILL BELIEVE THAT HANOI MUST EXERCISE GREAT CAUTION BECAUSE OF ITS CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE REACTION FROM PEKING AND ANXIETY OVER ITS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE, INCLUDING POSSIBLE DAMAGE TO ITS PROSPECTS OF OBTAINING FOREIGN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE.

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Message Attributes

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